

## *The President's Daily Brief*

~~Top Secret~~ 20 September 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S  
DAILY BRIEF  
20 SEPTEMBER 1968

1. Israel -  
Arab States

It has been a week and a half since the clashes along the Suez Canal, and Israel has failed to retaliate. The Israelis have spent the time brooding about the significance of the incidents, and our embassy reports a growing conviction in official Tel Aviv circles that the gap between Israeli and Egyptian military capabilities has suddenly narrowed. In this mood the Israelis could be tempted to make a pre-emptive strike in order to restore their faith in Israel's preponderance.

\* \* \*

Yesterday's terrorist ambush near the Jordan River, in which six Israeli soldiers including a lieutenant colonel were killed, will further whet the Israeli appetite for revenge.

2. Mexico

The Mexican press has generally supported the army's occupation of the National University, but the academic community is outraged. Further clashes between government forces and the militants seem almost inevitable.

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3. Nigeria

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4. Czechoslovakia -  
Soviet Union

The next visit of the Czech leaders to Moscow--now apparently scheduled for next week--promises to be almost as difficult as their last one. Pravda intimated yesterday that the Soviets intend to permit no compromises.

Deputy Premier Sik and Foreign Minister Hajek, the two liberals most heavily criticized by Moscow, have now left the cabinet, but the Czechs have balanced their departure by easing out three pro-Soviet officials as well. Reports continue to accumulate that Dubcek's own job is still on the line.

5. Soviet Union

The circumlunar spacecraft returns to earth tomorrow. At Annex we examine some of the problems of its recovery.

6. Guatemala

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7. Soviet Union -  
Germany

Berlin and West Germany have received much critical attention in Pravda and Izvestia recently. This is part of a Soviet campaign against the West German activities normally scheduled for West Berlin in the fall. It may also be an attempt to divert attention from Czechoslovakia.

Dobrynin has assured Secretary Rusk that the Soviets plan no moves against West Berlin in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The East Germans have made no such commitment, however.

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8. Communist China -  
India

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We have seen no sign that either side is preparing for major operations,

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] This is the season for border clashes, however. The Chinese have recently strengthened their garrison in the border area.

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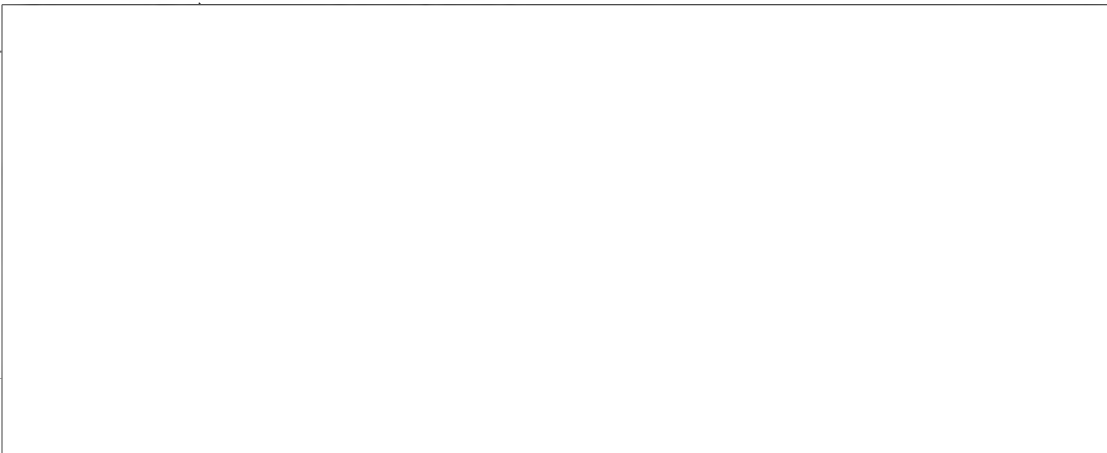
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**ANNEX****The Return of the Soviet Circumlunar Spacecraft**

Zond 5, the Soviet unmanned circumlunar probe, continues on its return course with all systems apparently functioning well. The spacecraft is expected to re-enter the earth's atmosphere around noon tomorrow.

The re-entry phase is one of the most critical of the mission, with little room for error. If the angle of re-entry is too sharp, the spacecraft could burn up; if too wide, it could skip off the atmosphere, veer back into space and become irretrievable.

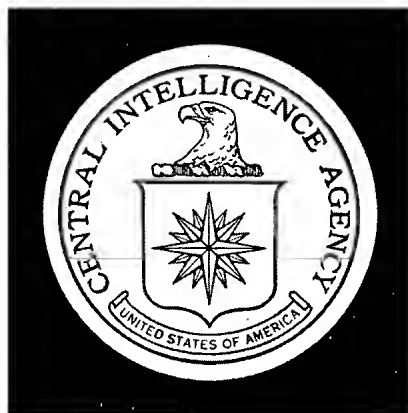
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*FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY*

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U.S  
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam  
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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Condition of Rice Crop:

[redacted] the recent typhoons, the latest of which hit the Hanoi area on 9 September, have caused serious flooding of the rice crop. [redacted]

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[redacted] the pumps have not been able to clear the fields rapidly enough to prevent damage to the crop. This latest typhoon also may have come too late to permit replanting. In addition, the rice crop is threatened by worms and a lack of fertilizer.

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[redacted] the latest typhoon caused widespread damage in the Hanoi area; some sections of the capital were without electricity for more than five days.

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End of Cuban Visit: A Cuban delegation headed by a Central Committee member left for home on Monday after a visit to North Vietnam. Hanoi Radio's international service in English announced on 18 September that during the Cubans' two-week stay they toured the Hanoi-Haiphong area and were received by Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong. The delegation pledged to strengthen the "militant solidarity and fraternal cooperation" between the two countries.

\* \* \*

Liberation Front Office in Paris: A Western wire service yesterday reported that the arrival in Paris today of a senior Liberation Front official has been postponed. The change in plans was announced in Paris by a North Vietnamese spokesman who declined to offer any explanation other than "technical reasons."

The delay probably is explained by the statement of Etienne Manac'h of the French Foreign Office to an American Embassy officer on Tuesday that he was able to persuade Debré to postpone for several days the granting of visas to Liberation Front officials now waiting in Moscow. It was clear, however, that Manac'h expected them to arrive in Paris before the end of the month.

## II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Concern Over Nixon: Manac'h also told another embassy officer that he sees concern on the part of the North Vietnamese over the possibility of a Nixon electoral victory. He pointed to the recent Hanoi broadcast castigating Mr. Nixon [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] as evidence that Hanoi considers him an uncompromising hawk on Vietnam. Manac'h added that the North Vietnamese had been critical of both US presidential candidates, but the recent attack on Nixon had seemed to him of sufficient interest to ask the French delegation in Hanoi for a report on the subject.

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